Consonants

stops: p, ph, b, t, th, d, k, kh, g, ʔ
affricatives: ʃ, tʃh, dʒ
fricatives: θ, ð, s, sh, ʃ, z, h

nasals: m, mh, n, nh, ɲ, ŋ, ŋh
lateral and flap: l, r
semi-vowels: j, w

Sixteen of the consonants can be set out in five-term series (including aspirate sonant): surd – aspirate surd – voiced stop – sonant – aspirate sonant, e.g. for labial series: /p – ph – b – m – mh/. (There is no specific graph for the aspirate sonant, which is written with the secondary form of *h*: e.g. ᨾ = *ma*, ᨿ = *hma*.) Aspiration and consonant are pronounced simultaneously, and may be conventionally notated either as C*h*, or as *h*C, where C = consonant.

Most consonants can be labialized: /p°, t°, k°/, etc.; /p, b, m/ can be palatalized.

CONSONANT GRADATION

Unvoiced stop → voiced stop in intervocalic position or following a nasal: e.g. *kauŋ* + *kauŋ* → [kauŋgauŋ]; *θwa* + *tɔ* → [θwà**d**ɔ́].

Vowels

i, e, ɛ, a, ɔ, o, u, ə

DIPHTHONGS

ei, ou, au, ai

Diphthongs are always followed by /ŋ/ or by /ʔ/, e.g. /eiŋ/ 'house'; /kauŋ/ '(to be) good'.

Syllables are *full*, i.e. with all components receiving their full phonetic value, or *reduced*, with vowels tending to /ə/. This characteristic is not typical of Tibeto-Burman, and may indicate Mon-Khmer influence.

The Burmese syllable must contain a vowel or diphthong, which may be preceded and/or followed by a consonant: $(C_1)V(C_2)$ where V = vowel or diphthong. There is a wide choice for C_1, but C_2 can only be /ŋ/ or /k, t, p/, realized as [ʔ]. C_1 may be followed by the semi-vowel /j/ or /w/ (i.e. palatalized or labialized).

Tone

There are three tones. The level tone is unmarked; the heavy falling tone is marked in the script by visarga and in transcription by grave accent; the 'creaky' tone is marked in the script by subscript dot, and in notation by acute accent. In addition, an abrupt (implosive or choked-off) tone occurs before the glottal stop final: this is unmarked in script. Tone marking is not consistent.

COMPENDIUM OF THE WORLD'S LANGUAGES
SECOND EDITION
GEORGE L. CAMPBELL
ISBN 0-415-20298-1 (Set)
Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada by Routledge
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